

CULTURAL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES FOR MAORI

Guidance for Mainstream Mental Health Services

**Mental
Health**
COMMISSION

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Cover painting by Reimana Hobman, Pablos Art Studios, Wellington

Mihi

**He pukepuke moana e ekehia e te Waka
He pukepuke Maunga e ekehia e te tangata
He tihi tangata e kore e ekehia
He tapu, he tapu, he tapu.**

E nga Rangatira, nga ihoiho o nga maunga whakahi, nga tapu, nga ihi, nga wehi, te aria o nga tipuna kua ngaro ki te po, tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa. Tena koutou i roto i nga tumanako o a tatau kaupapa whai oranga hinengaro. E mihi ana ki a koutou katoa. He mea nui rawa atu te tumanako, i whakairohia ai te poutokomanua o te whare wairua:

**Ko te whakapono
Ko te tumanako
Ko te aroha te mea nui rawa atu.**

Anei ra koutou e tumanako nei ki te whai huarahi hei kawe i a tatau katoa whakamua. Na to koutou arohanui, ka nan koutou kia eke.

**Eke panuku
Eke Tangaroa
Haumi e, hui e!
Taiki e!**

*Waka can navigate the great waves of the ocean
People can conquer the great mountain summits
People are the sacred image of the Gods
Therefore, people cannot be conquered
Because they are forever sacred.*

To the Rangatira, descendants of great ancestors, bearers of the inherited legacy, greetings, greetings, greetings to you all. Greetings to you in our collective quest for better ways to find well being in mental health. Endeavour is indeed a special goal carved upon the great pillars of spirituality:

***Faith
Endeavour
And love, the greatest of them all.***

You have indeed endeavoured to take us forward because of your unconditional love. You strive for excellence to reach yonder shores.

***Eke panaku
Eke Tangaroa
Haumi e hui e!
Taiki e!***

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Introduction

The Mental Health Commission was established by Government in 1996 to ensure the implementation of the National Mental Health Strategy and thereby improve services and outcomes for people with mental illness and their families/whanau.

To achieve its primary focus the Commission:

- monitors and reports to the Minister of Health on the performance of the whole mental health sector;
- promotes better understanding by the community of mental illness and the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of mental illness;
- works with the sector to strengthen the mental health workforce.

The Commission recognises the Government's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi and totally supports the Government's objective of improving the health status of Maori so that the current disparities in mental health status between Maori and non-Maori are eliminated.

Background

In November 1998 the Commission released its *Blueprint for Mental Health Services in New Zealand – How things need to be*. This document, now Government policy, sets out the Commission's view of what kinds and levels of services need to be present to meet the needs of different groups of people.

The *Blueprint* provides guidance on how mental health services should be delivered so that Maori have a choice of high quality kaupapa Maori and/or culturally effective mainstream services. It provides direction for providers on the implementation of the National Mental Health Strategy to "encourage Maori involvement in planning, developing and delivering mental health services" and on the achievement of objectives and targets set out in *Moving Forward*¹ such as:

"To increase the responsiveness of mainstream mental health services to the special needs of Maori" (National Objective 2.2).

"By July 1999, all mental health services will be using cultural assessment procedures for Maori consumers" (Target 2.2.1).

Improving Maori mental health is a Government health priority² with explicit goals.³ This commitment to Maori must be translated into tangible and culturally appropriate mental health outcomes and recovery for Maori.

Since the publication of the *Blueprint*, the Commission has released other publications aimed at assisting key stakeholders to promote best practice, innovation and continued service improvement across all services, with particular emphasis on services for Maori and children and young people.

¹ *Moving Forward: the national mental health plan for more and better services*. Wellington: Ministry of Health, July 1997.

² *New Zealand Health Strategy*. Minister of Health, December 2000, pp 17-19.

³ *Moving Forward*.

Purpose of this paper

This paper has been developed by the Commission as a means of further assisting service providers to support and provide cultural safety for Maori through developing their own locally relevant cultural assessment processes. The Commission recognises that one assessment tool or process cannot be developed that fits all; and that mental health services need to develop their own processes for themselves in partnership with their local iwi.

The Commission acknowledges that there are already service providers who practice cultural safety and have developed and regularly utilise their own cultural assessment guidelines. The Commission also acknowledges the work previously undertaken by key Maori who have applied themselves, over the past five years, to defining the importance of cultural assessment for tangata whaiora. Much of their work has formed the basis of these guidelines.

This paper offers initial guidance to services that have not yet begun to develop their cultural assessment processes. Cultural assessment needs to be linked to the ongoing process of planning, treatment, transfer/discharge and be compatible with the culturally sensitive processes associated with them. The paper aims to provide guidance to mental health services to enable them to work with their local iwi to develop their own locally relevant systems and processes for cultural assessment.

What do we want to achieve with these guidance notes?

We want services to have:

- a better understanding of the importance of cultural safety, cultural identity and assessment in achieving good outcomes for Maori
- a good understanding that cultural assessment processes will be iwi specific, but contain the same core elements
- knowledge about how to set about developing cultural assessment systems and processes within the local service, with mana whenua and Maori
- knowledge of who to approach and who must be involved.

Cultural safety

Understanding, supporting and strengthening identity is an important component of recovery. Recovery for Maori can be helped by ensuring services are culturally safe, meet Maori needs and expectations and strengthen their identity.

One of the principles of the Treaty gives the right to cultural protection and all mental health services must ensure that they offer cultural safety for Maori. The first step towards cultural safety is to provide an environment in which Maori feel comfortable, for example, by ensuring access to Maori health workers including kaumatua.

What is cultural assessment?

Cultural assessment “*refers to the process through which the relevance of culture to mental health is ascertained*”.⁴ Throughout these guidelines “cultural relevance” relates specifically to the significance tangata whaiora place upon their identity as Maori and how they perceive the role of their cultural heritage in assisting them to achieve wellness.

The assessment should not only be used to determine the mental state of tangata whaiora, but also as a tool in planning treatment and rehabilitation programmes. It can also be used to determine the significance of cultural factors for the person and to enable planning of treatment and rehabilitation processes that address any cultural issues.

While cultural assessment processes may vary from service provider to service provider it is important to remember that they should always be seen as complementary to clinical assessment and any diagnostic tool, such as DSM IV.

□ Cultural assessment should also be seen as supporting service providers to develop and maintain culturally effective and relevant services to tangata whaiora and whanau.

Shared responsibility

The establishment of cultural safety for Maori in assessment processes is not only reliant on services establishing operational policy and procedural tools. It is also dependent on the strategic guidance from District Health Boards (DHB) and DHB provider management. The organisation needs to be receptive and responsive to Maori needs. This requires the co-ordinated and agreed strategic direction of human resource and workforce development, policy development, best practice development and decision-making processes. There must also be the appropriate numbers of Maori staff and expertise available and effective monitoring of service provision.

⁴ MH Durie, A Gillies, Te K Kingi, MM Ratima, J Waldon, PS Morrison, GR Allan. *Guidelines for Purchasing Personal Mental Health Services for Maori*. A report prepared for the Ministry of Health, Research Report TPH 95/4, June 1995.

What is the purpose of cultural assessment?

The purpose of cultural assessment is to identify a person's cultural needs, and any cultural supports and/or Maori healing practices, needed to strengthen identity and enhance wellness.

Cultural assessment is not an outcome or end in itself. It is only useful if it leads to more informed and appropriate treatment and support for tangata whaiora. The outcome of cultural assessment should be a comprehensive treatment and care plan, which includes any necessary cultural supports. The information gained from the cultural assessment should fashion the whole clinical care pathway. Mainstream mental health services should ask those who identify as Maori whether they would like access to cultural assessment and support.

It is widely accepted by practitioners working in mental health services that cultural identity plays a significant part in the wellness of individuals and their communities. Cultural assessment not only acknowledges the link between identity, wellness, treatment and recovery for tangata whaiora but also provides a process that can be adopted by mental health services to provide the best outcomes for tangata whaiora.

When to do cultural assessment

Cultural assessment should not be regarded as a one-off, once only process, but as part of ongoing comprehensive assessment.

Cultural assessment may take different forms and may be considered at any or all of the following points:



At **point of entry** to the Crisis Team
 On **admission**
Assessing disability of mental illness
 Assessing appropriate **treatment options**
 For **rehabilitation care plans**
 For **transfer/discharge planning**
Follow-up in the community

Who should do a cultural assessment?

For a comprehensive cultural assessment to be completed for tangata whaiora, it is essential that someone who is authorised and trained to do cultural assessment and is conversant with matauranga/tikanga Maori me te reo Maori conduct it. The ideal practitioner would be someone of the same hapu and/or iwi as the tangata whaiora. However it is acknowledged that this is often very difficult to accomplish.

Some suggested aims for cultural assessment⁵

These aims include the need to ensure that tangata whaiora participate as equal partners in the assessment process. Cultural assessments take place in a broad policy context that stresses tangata whaiora involvement. Their permission needs to be sought to involve whanau and significant others.

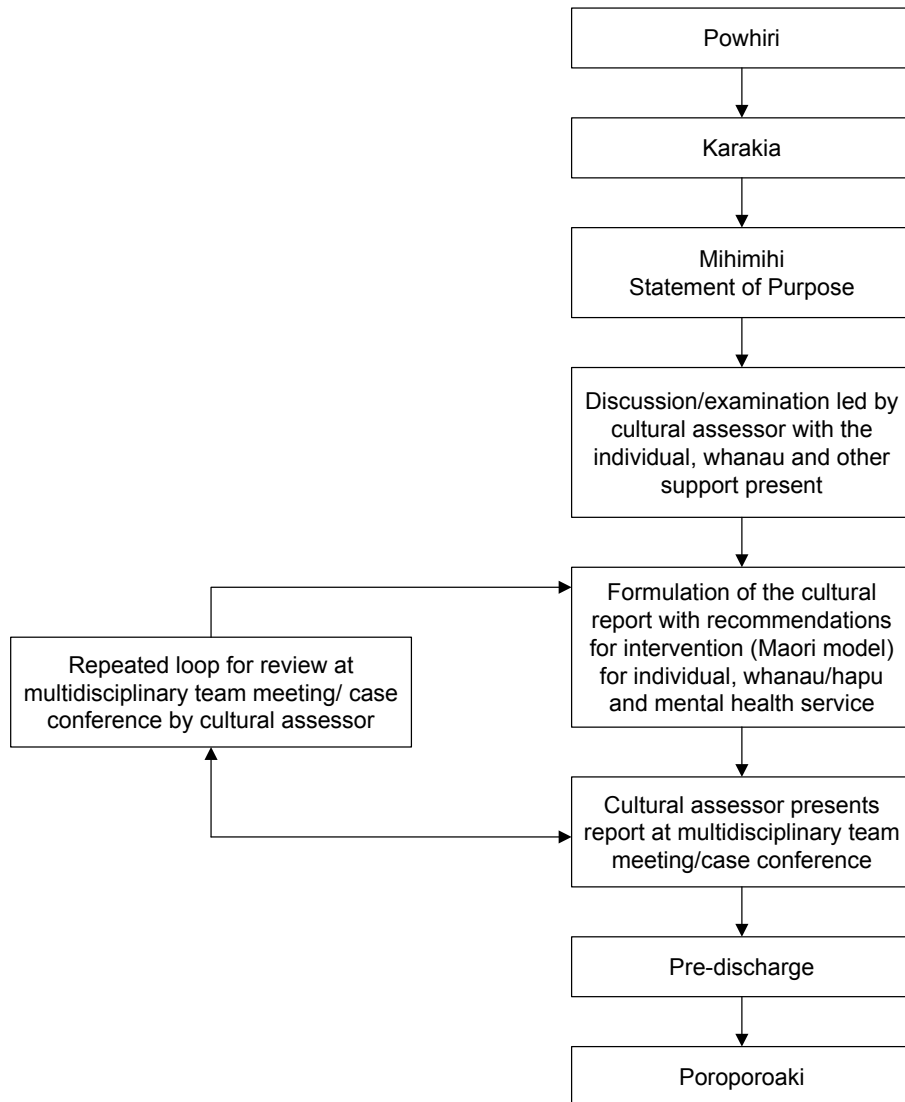
- To establish a framework for inclusion of culturally determined factors into treatment options for Maori.
- To establish a Maori cultural process that encourages tangata whaiora and whanau input.
- To define, as and when appropriate, the principles of Te Whare Tapa Wha as a framework for assessing the needs of tangata whaiora and their whanau.
- To identify and encourage participation of whanau and significant others who could be involved in the utilisation of intervention, assessment, treatment and transfer/ discharge planning processes.
- To investigate and examine the presence of culturally bound concepts, for example, Mate Maori, Makutu, Whakamomori Mate kite and Whakama.
- To ensure cultural and linguistic compatibility is incorporated into assessment and treatment of tangata whaiora Maori as outlined in the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act, 1992 and the Criminal Justice Act, 1985.
- To develop and encourage a culturally dignified forum within which tangata whaiora, whanau and significant others can participate.
- To provide a forum where whanau and significant others may meet with and discuss tangata whaiora wellbeing with multi-disciplinary professionals.
- To ensure tangata whaiora, whanau and significant others are informed of diagnostic options, assessment processes, interventions and treatment options, early warning signs, prevention plans, ongoing care plans, complaints procedures and resolution, and privacy codes.
- To empower whanau and significant others to provide information and to make suggestions and/or on behalf of tangata whaiora, when this is appropriate.
- To ensure that whanau and significant others are informed of treatment options, privacy codes and tangata whaiora rights.
- To enlighten whanau and significant others on tangata whaiora legal status and, if applicable, any legal status of the assessor and his/her associates and their roles within the assessment and treatment processes.

⁵ Tuia Services, Maori Mental Health, South Auckland Health DHB

What cultural assessment processes could contain

The following is an excerpt from the “Guidelines for Cultural Assessment in Mental Health Services” prepared by the mental health section of the Ministry of Health in July 1995 with guidance from Kaumatua. Other services, as mentioned before, may have already developed their own procedures; the process described here is by no means the only process that can be initiated.

It is suggested that first contact for cultural assessment occur within the first eight hours of the individual’s presentation to the service.



The assessment will take place in the first instance between the cultural assessor and the tangata whaiora. The whanau may wish to be involved at this stage and it is up to the tangata whaiora whether they wish to have the assessment on their own with the assessor, or with whanau present.

Flexibility is the key to achieving a successful outcome for the tangata whaiora. The tangata whaiora may not wish to have any contact with their whanau and the assessor must respect these wishes (*Guidelines for Cultural Assessment*, Ministry of Health, 1995).

Principles for cultural assessment

To honour the intentions of the Treaty of Waitangi for Maori partnership, participation and protection.

To enhance the cultural perspective of the client and their whanau, hapu and iwi through appropriate assessment, care and treatment.

To establish and maintain a culturally effective and safe mental health service.

To ensure the quality and effectiveness of assessment, care and treatment in mental health services for Maori.

To improve the efficiency in the assessment, care and treatment for Maori in mental health services.

To ensure the involvement of Maori in the development and delivery of mental health services.

To empower the client and their whanau, hapu and iwi to achieve mental wellbeing through assessment, care and treatment processes in the mental health service.